

Message Text

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAPPORO 009

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, JA

SUBJECT: HAS JCP GROWTH HIT A CEILING?

1. SUMMARY: HOKKAIDO OBSERVERS CLAIM JCP GROWTH HAS STAGNATED AND OFFER SEVERAL PLAUSIBLE REASONS, BUT SO FAR, LITTLE HARD EVIDENCE. END SUMMARY

2. LOCAL BUSINESSMEN, POLITICIANS AND REPORTERS HAVE BEEN TELLING US LATELY THAT JAPAN COMMUNIST PARTY (JCP) EXPANSION HAS REACHED A CEILING IN HOKKAIDO. THE JCP'S LOSS OF ASSEMBLY SEATS DURING LAST AUGUST'S LOCAL ELECTIONS, COMING AFTER THE PARTY'S ADVANCES IN THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1972 AND THE UPPER HOUSE RACE IN 1974, IS FREQUENTLY CITED AS EVIDENCE OF THE PARTY'S LIMITATIONS. OTHER SIGNS NOTED ARE THE DROP IN THE PARTY'S PUBLIC SUPPORT (ACCORDING TO HOKKAIDO SHIMBUN POLLS THE PUBLIC SUPPORT FELL FROM 8.3 PERCENT IN 1974 TO 5.4 PERCENT IN 1975), A LEVELING OFF OF AKAHATA CIRCULATION, AND THE VERY SLOW RISE IN THE NUMBER OF HOKKAIDO JCP MEMBERS (APPROXIMATELY 18,500 IN 1969 AND 21,000 IN 1975).

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3. LOCAL GOJ INVESTIGATIVE AGENCY REGARDS THE HOKKAIDO JCP AS A "SLEEPY" BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION, AND CLAIMS THE LOCAL CADRES' PROBLEMS STEM FROM THEIR LACK OF VIGOR IN ATTRACTING YOUNG CAMPAIGN WORKERS AND IN PENETRATING SOHYO AND DOMEI AFFILIATED UNIONS. BUT DIFFERENT LOCAL OBSERVERS ALSO CITE OTHER DIFFICULTIES THEY SAY AFFECT THE JCP THROUGHOUT JAPAN:

4. NATURAL LIMIT: THE JCP HAS NOW ABSORBED A LARGE PORTION OF JAPAN'S MARGINAL AND ALIENATED WORKERS AND INTELLECTUALS, ITS NATURAL CONSTITUENCY, AND HAS ALREADY GAINED CONTROL OF THE MORE WEAKLY LED AND RADICAL PUBLIC WORKERS' UNIONS IN SOHYO. THE PARTY HAS BEEN TRYING TO PENETRATE SMALL AND MEDIUM BUSINESSES, SOKA GAKKAI AND STRONGER PRIVATE COMPANY UNIONS, BUT CANNOT MAKE GAINS IN THESE AS EASILY. THE PARTY DEPENDS UPON ITS MEMBERS AND CONTROLLED ORGANIZATIONS NOT ONLY FOR SECURE VOTES, BUT ALSO FOR THE CAMPAIGN EFFORTS WHICH MARSHAL THE FLOATING VOTES NEEDED TO ELECT JCP CANDIDATES. IF PARTY MEMBERSHIP AND AFFILIATED GROUPS DO NOT EXPAND, IT IS BELIEVED THE JCP ELECTION MACHINERY, AND HENCE JCP VOTE PERCENTAGE WILL LIKEWISE BE LIMITED.

5. IN ADDITION, IT IS NOTED THAT SINCE THE 1972 GENERAL ELECTION, THE PARTY HAS ESPOUSED MORE MODERATE POLICIES AND NOMINATED CANDIDATES WITH GOOD CIVIC IMAGES. WITH THIS STRATEGY, IT SUCCEEDED IN ATTRACTING AN UNPRECEDENTED NUMBER OF UNCOMMITTED VOTERS, AND THEREBY GAINED ITS FIRST UPPER AND LOWER HOUSE SEATS FROM THE PREFECTURE. HOWEVER, POLITICIANS AND SCHOLARS HERE FEEL THE JCP CANNOT AUTOMATICALLY COUNT ON MARSHALLING THESE VOTES AS A BASE FOR FURTHER GAINS BECAUSE THESE VOTERS MUST BE WON OVER ANEW WITH

EACH ELECTION. AS THE MOOD OF THE ELECTORATE CHANGES FROM ELECTION TO ELECTION, WINNING THESE SAME VOTERS AGAIN COULD BECOME MORE DIFFICULT.

6. ANOTHER FACET OF THIS "NATURAL LIMIT" IS THE BELIEF THAT THE JCP'S EXPANSION HAS STIMULATED A REACTION FROM ITS OPPONENTS. LDP-JSP COOPERATION ON LEGISLATION DESIGNED TO RESTRICT MASS CAMPAIGN MACHINERY IS ONE EXAMPLE. ANOTHER, ACCORDING TO ITS VICE CHAIRMAN, CONFIDENTIAL

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IS THE SAPPORO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE'S NEW RECESSION-ORIENTED LOAN PROGRAM DESIGNED TO LURE SMALL AND MEDIUM BUSINESSMEN AWAY FROM JCP AFFILIATED GROUPS. THIS VICE CHAIRMAN, WHO HEADS A MAJOR HOKKAIDO STEEL COMPANY, ALSO REPORTED THAT SOKA GAKKAI MEMBERS AMONG HIS WORKERS COOPERATE WITH HIM IN EFFORTS TO CONTROL COMMUNISTS IN THE COMPANY. LOCAL KOMEITO LEADERS CLAIM SUCCESS IN THEIR CAMPAIGN THIS PAST YEAR TO PURGE SOKA GAKKAI OF JCP SYMPATHIZERS WHO HAVE INFILTRATED OVER THE YEARS. AN EDITOR FOR THE HOKKAI TIMES

SUGGESTED THAT EVEN THE JSP HAS MANAGED TO STAUNCH THE FLOW OF YOUTHFUL SUPPORTERS TO THE JCP THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF JSP AFFILIATED SOCIALISM ASSOCIATION.

7. CONSERVATIVE MOOD: LOCAL CONSERVATIVE POLITICIANS AND BUSINESSMEN OFTEN ALLUDE TO A NEW CONSERVATIVE NATIONAL MOOD IN CONNECTION WITH THE JCP'S PROBLEMS. ONE SOURCE OF THIS MOOD WAS THE END OF THE VIETNAM WAR, WHICH ELIMINATED A RALLYING ISSUE FOR EXTREMIST GROUPS, AND HENCE LIMITED THE JCP'S ABILITY TO ATTRACT AND MOTIVATE YOUNG MEMBERS AND/OR CAMPAIGN WORKERS. THE COMMUNIST TAKEOVER IN VIETNAM ALSO INCREASED POPULAR CONCERN OVER COMMUNIST GROWTH IN ASIA, WHICH REDUCED THE PARTY'S APPEAL TO UNCOMMITTED VOTERS, THEY SAY.

8. ANOTHER ELEMENT OF THE NEW CONSERVATISM IS THE RECESSION. THE CHAIRMAN OF THE HOKKAIDO LDP RECENTLY ASSERTED THAT BAD TIMES ARE GOOD FOR THE LDP BECAUSE VOTERS FEEL THEY CANNOT AFFORD THE "LUXURY" OF VOTING FOR IMPRACTICAL AND UNEXPERIENCED OPPOSITION CANDIDATES DURING A CRISIS. AS THE MOST RADICAL OF THE OPPOSITION PARTIES, THE JCP MAY BE ESPECIALLY HURT BY THIS MOOD.

9. GENERATION GAP: ALTHOUGH THEY CAN PRODUCE LITTLE EVIDENCE, LOCAL NEWSMEN HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES OF THE PRE-WAR AND POST-WAR GENERATIONS WITHIN THE JCP WILL INCREASINGLY HINDER PARTY EXPANSION. A HOKKAIDO GAKUEN UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR, WHO RECENTLY PUBLISHED A STUDY OF JCP VOTING IN SAPPORO, TOLD US THAT CADRES OF CHAIRMAN MIYAMOTO'S GENERATION RETAIN THEIR DEDICATION TO CENTRALIZATION, SECRECY AND CONTROLLED EXPANSION OF BOTH PARTY MEMBERSHIP AND ELECTORAL OFFICES. YOUNGER PARTY WORKERS, LACKING THE EXPERIENCE OF PRE-WAR REPRESSION, ARE FAR LESS PATIENT, AND ARE LIKELY TO GROW RESTIVE IF THEY CANNOT MAINTAIN THE PARTY'S CONFIDENTIAL

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RAPID EXPANSION. HENCE THE MOTIVATION OF YOUNGER PARTY WORKERS, WHO ARE CRUCIAL TO THE JCP'S ELECTION MACHINERY, MAY BE INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO GENERATE.

10. LOOKING TOWARD THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION, ANALYSTS FROM TWO LOCAL NEWSPAPERS AND ONE LOCAL MAGAZINE AGREE THAT THE JCP WILL NOT IMPROVE ON ITS 1972 PERFORMANCE IN HOKKAIDO. MITSUO TADA, A FORMER PROFESSOR, APPEARS ALMOST CERTAIN TO WIN REELECTION IN THE FIRST DISTRICT (SAPPORO), AND SHIZUKO SATO, WITHOUT BEING ELECTED, MAY MANAGE A STRONG SHOWING AGAIN IN THE FOURTH DISTRICT, BUT ELSEWHERE THE PARTY'S VOTE PERCENTAGE WILL BE SLIM.

11. COMMENT: WE AGREE THAT THE JCP FACES A NUMBER OF NEW PROBLEMS IN EXPANDING ITS ELECTORAL BASE AND NOW SEEMS

UNLIKELY TO GAIN ANOTHER SEAT IN HOKKAIDO THIS YEAR. HOW-
EVER, WE NOTE THAT EVEN THOUGH IT LOST HOKKAIDO
PREFECTURAL AND CITY ASSEMBLY SEATS IN LAST SUMMER'S "WATERSHED"
LOCAL ELECTIONS, THE JCP'S PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL VOTE STILL ROSE
TO 9 PERCENT (FROM 6 PERCENT IN THE 1971 LOCAL ELECTION). WE
ATTRIBUTE THE PARTY'S FAILURE TO GAIN SEATS AS MUCH TO THE
OVER-AMBITIOUS NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IT FIELDDED AS TO THE
PROBLEMS CITED ABOVE. PERHAPS THE OTHER PARTIES'
EFFORTS TO CHECK THE JCP'S GROWTH SINCE LAST SUMMER WILL SHOW
IN THIS YEAR'S GENERAL ELECTION RESULTS. BUT WE HAVE YET TO
SEE SOLID EVIDENCE THAT JCP HAS HIT A TRUE CEILING, RATHER THAN
A TEMPORARY PLATEAU, IN ITS ELECTORAL GROWTH.
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